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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JAN. 10, 1865.—Referred to Special Committee on Impressments, and ordered to be printed.

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

RICHMOND, VA., Jan. 5, 1865.

To the House of Representatives:

In response to your resolution of the 2d ultimo, relative to the impressment of slaves, I herewith transmit a communication from the Secretary of War; which conveys all the information I have on the subject.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

COMMUNICATION FROM SECRETARY OF WAR.

WAR DEPARTMENT, C. S. A.
Richmond, Dec. 20, 1864.

To the President of the Confederate States:

SIR:

I have received a resolution of the House of Representatives relative to the impressment of slaves, adopted on the 2d instant, a copy of which is herewith enclosed.

The Superintendent of Conscription, to whom the resolution was sent for report, furnishes, in his reply, copies of the orders issued by him on that subject, but states he is not in possession of the information demanded. Major General Kemper, commanding the Reserves, also makes a report as to the impressment of slaves in Virginia. Copies of both these letters are herewith transmitted, and furnish all the information at the command of this Department.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,

JAMES A. SEDDON,
Secretary of War.

RESOLUTION OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

C. S. A., EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
Richmond, Va., Dec. 5, 1864.

Hon. Secretary of War:

SIR:

I have the honor, by direction of the President, to forward for your attention and the proper action, a copy of a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 2d instant, as follows:

RESOLUTION.

"Resolved; That the President be requested to inform this House whether, at this time, there are in the employment of the Confederate States, slaves impressed, exceeding one in five of the male slaves between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, of one owner, and whether any slaves have been impressed and are now in service, on a basis of calculation including female slaves between the ages of eighteen and forty-five; and if such impressments have been made, by what authority it has been done, and whether the credit directed to be allowed in the impressment of slaves by the provisions of the act of February 17th, 1864, has been allowed."

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
BURTON N. HARRISON,
Private Secretary.

MAJ. GEN. KEMPER:

Furnish as complete an answer as possible to this resolution.

By order.
J. A. CAMPBELL,
Asst. Sec. of War.

Dec. 16, 1864.

HEAD QUARTERS, RESERVE FORCES, VA.
December 19, 1864.

Respectfully returned, inviting attention to enclosed report.

J. L. KEMPER,
Maj. General.

HEAD QUARTERS RESERVE FORCES, VA.
December 19, 1864.

GEN. S. COOPER, *A. & I. General:*

GENERAL:

In compliance with the enclosed order of the Assistant Secretary of War, dated the 16th instant, I have the honor to report that the impressment of slaves in Virginia, for twelve months' service, has been conducted in strict conformity to the enclosed circular letter (marked A)—that is to say, the impressment has been apportioned ratably among all the slaveholders of each county, so as to charge each slaveholder with the same proportion of his male slaves between the ages of 18 and 45 years, capable of performing ordinary labor; but in no case has any one person contributed more than one out of five male slaves between the ages specified. It is true that, by an error, the impressment was begun in two counties of the State on a basis of calculation which included female slaves within the ages specified, but the error was promptly corrected, and the slaves thus improperly impressed were all released and restored to their owners.

I have the honor to be,
Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,

J. L. KEMPER,
Major General.

[A.]

CONSCRIPT OFFICE,
Richmond, Oct. ———, 1864.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

To —— ——, *Enrolling Officer*, —— *County:*

Circular No. 70, from this office, is hereby revoked, and the following is the apportionment of slaves to be taken from your county, under the provisions of Circular No. 69, Conscript Office (current series). Circular No. 69, Conscript Office (current series), is in full force.

County.	Slaves.

This requisition will be apportioned ratably among all the slaveholders in your county, so as to charge each slaveholder with the same proportion of his male slaves between the ages specified, capa-

ble of performing ordinary labor; but in no case will this requisition take more than one out of five male slaves between the ages specified, from any one person. Care should be taken that the slave impressed is able-bodied. These slaves must be collected and forwarded with the utmost possible expedition.

You will cause the Advisory Board of your county to use extraordinary diligence in the collection of these negroes, and forwarding them to Capt. W. H. Fry, Adjutant of the Post, at Camp Lee, with full descriptive list, giving the name of owner. Receipt should be taken in each case. It is suggested that the commissioners' books be taken as a guide.

By order of Lt. Col. J. C. Shields.

——, *Lieut. and Adj't.*

RESPONSE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF CONSCRIPTION.

Confederate States of America,
War Department,
Bureau of Conscription,
Richmond, Va., Dec. 16, 1864.

Hon. James A. Seddon, *Secretary of War:*

Sir:

The following resolution of the House of Representatives has been referred to this Bureau for attention:

"Resolved, That the President be requested to inform this House whether at this time there are in the employment of the Confederate States, slaves impressed, exceeding one in five of the male slaves between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, of one owner, and whether any slaves have been impressed, and are now in service, on a basis of calculation including female slaves between the ages of eighteen and forty-five; and if such impressments have been made, by what authority it has been done, and whether the credit directed to be allowed in the impressment of slaves by the provisions of the act of February 17th, 1864, has been allowed."

The Bureau is not in possession of the information demanded by this resolution.

Only two impressments of slaves have been made by the direction of this Bureau.

The first was under your instructions of the 21st of September ultimo, for 5,000 slaves from the state of Virginia, for service with the army of Northern Virginia, for thirty days. The following direction was given to the Commandant of Conscripts for Virginia, by the Bureau, for the execution of your order:

"September 21st—Respectfully referred to Lieut. Col. Shields, to take immediate steps for compliance with the within order of the Secretary of War. The urgency of the matter, as represented by

General Lee, should cause the utmost promptitude. Return this paper for the files of this office."

The second was under your instructions of the 24th September ultimo. to procure negroes under the Act of Congress of February 17, 1864, authorizing the employment of free negroes and slaves in certain capacities, to increase the efficiency of the army. In communicating these instructions to the Generals of Reserves, the Bureau accompanied them with an order, of which the following is an extract:

"September 30th—To Generals of Reserves—Respectfully referred * * * to direct the officer of conscription to proceed immediately and with vigor to the completion of the enrollment of the free negroes in the State under your command, between the ages of 18 and 50, and to deal with them in accordance with the instructions herein contained. Enrolling officers will also be instructed to procure from the owner, by contracts, as many of the slaves herein required from your State, as can be obtained thereby, and to make the necessary arrangements to procure the deficit by impressment. If the Legislature of your State has passed any law for the collection of slaves for military service in the Confederate States, the Bureau desires to be immediately informed of its provisions. It is desired that the within instructions and the regulations that may be prepared by the Bureau or the General commanding, &c. and charged with the business of conscription for their enforcement, will not be published in any newspaper."

Under these orders, no returns have yet been made to this Bureau, though repeatedly called for from the Generals of Reserves.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your very respectful, ob't serv't,

JNO. S. PRESTON,
Brig. Gen. and Supt.

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